

February 23rd, 2026

To the esteemed members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

I am writing today to express my concerns about the recommendations to make changes within the 282 certification structure contained in Chapter 115, part 2., as I am unable to testify in person. I am a State of Maine educator who holds four state certificates, 020, B-5 282, K-8 282, and 079, who has practiced for 30 years. I am also a parent of a child who received high-quality early childhood special education services, and did not need K-12 special education services because of the quality of these services, and I am concerned about these proposed changes.

The concerns I have relate to the changes in 115 are contained within pages 31-33. *Specifically:*

1. Shift in the 282 certification to endorsing teaching Birth through grade 12, versus delineation by age and development as it had been (birth to school age 5, kindergarten through grade 8, or grades 7 through 12).

2.1.A:

The language I am referencing specifically is on page 31 of Chapter 115, Part 2, amended.

Proposed language: This endorsement on a teacher certificate allows the holder to teach children with disabilities from **birth through grade 12** and to consult with teachers, children, and parents/guardians. This removes the prior language: *The endorsement specifies the applicable grade levels: birth to school age 5, kindergarten through grade 8, or grades 7 through 12.*

- A. *Removing the grade specific endorsements is deeply concerning for our children with disabilities in the state of Maine.*** When we make changes to structures, it should be for the betterment of our children. What seems to be driving these proposed changes is the lack of special educators, all educators really. We are lacking, no question. However, there is already a structure in place with pathways to fill empty special educator positions. This current proposed change to the 282 allows staff to shift in their developmental, age-based area of expertise (potentially leaving a special educator position empty or diminished) but does not require knowledge and expertise to meet the developmental needs of children they are shifting to serve. Currently the path to credential staff for each of these endorsements requires development specific coursework, and for good reason.
- B.** To focus on one age group to highlight my concern, Birth-5, the development of these children changes rapidly, even day by day. Educators who are working with children in this age group, attempting to close gaps in learning, need to have a strong understanding of developmentally appropriate practice, and the path that development takes. As an educator who started off with a general education degree, and a K-8 282, I

can tell you the work with the children is profoundly different, as is the education you need to provide high quality education.

- C. When making a change to certification we should look to our national standards for special education professionals. The [Council for Exceptional Children](#) (CEC) 8 years through 22 years, and the [Division for Early Childhood of the CEC](#), Birth through age 8 provide the standards for preparation of special education professionals who educate children with disabilities, across the age span. What is being proposed is not in alignment with these standards.
- D. The education field is reporting challenges with behavior of children in general, at very high rates. Removing required developmental knowledge and skill of those educating any age groups will only increase the challenges experienced by educators, and the success of our students. We are lacking in our Least Restrictive Environments in Maine. Putting out students in situations where the educators may not understand how to respond to their developmentally appropriate needs could increase the likelihood that a child will be seen as responding behaviorally. This can lead to more restrictive educational settings for children.
- E. And lastly on this topic, the proposed certification structure seems to acknowledge that it is necessary to delineate the certifications in general education by development and age, but not children with disabilities?

2. Removal of specific requirements to be certified:

2. 2.1.2.B.c

~~Removal of: For the birth to school age 5 grade level, c-Completed a minimum of three semester hours for teaching early childhood special education;~~

2. 2.1.2.B.e

Completed a minimum of three semester hours in human development, educational psychology, developmental psychology, adolescent psychology, or child development, **or equivalent;**

2. 2.1.2.B.g

~~Completed one academic semester or a minimum of 15 weeks of full-time student teaching, or a combination of part-time and full-time student teaching in an amount equivalent to 15 weeks in this endorsement area at the specified grade level: birth to school age 5, kindergarten through grade 8, or grades 7 through 12.~~

Changed to: Student teaching in a general education classroom can be accepted to satisfy this special education endorsement requirement provided there is verification from the school system or SAU that specially designed instruction, for the purpose of special education was delivered by the candidate during the student teaching experience. This requirement shall be waived upon completion of one full year of successful teaching under a conditional certificate in this endorsement area at the specified grade level.

Removal of coursework that support understanding of development and the student teaching requirement within age specific special education settings is not preparing future teachers to have the skills and developmental expertise to work with children with disabilities

3. Changes in 282 Renewal Endorsement:

2.1.6 Endorsement Renewal for Current Holders of the 282 Endorsement at any grade span: A current holder of a valid 282 Endorsement at any grade span can renew their endorsement in the birth to grade 12 grade span. *Renewal, should include a requirement to have curriculum that is based in the development of the age group they are working with.*

I would encourage the Board of Education to not just endorse this certification change. There is much to consider. Please consider offering our children with disabilities the opportunity for educators who have developmental expertise to provide their services. I implore this group to review the national standards from the CEC/DEC referenced earlier in this letter, to guide the requirements for the professionals who educate children with disabilities, across the age span. I am happy to have more conversations with any of you to support understanding, please reach out.

Marnie Morneault